

Animal Ears:

Adaptations for Hearing



Big Ears

The fennec fox is the smallest member of the fox family, but it has the biggest ears. It lives in the hot desert and usually hunts at night, when it is cooler. In the dark, the fox relies on its super sharp hearing to find beetles and crickets crawling across the sand.

African elephants have the biggest ears on Earth—and some of the best. They can hear low, rumble sounds from miles away. But an elephant's ears aren't just good for hearing. The elephant waves its large, thin ears to cool the blood inside them. The cooled blood travels to the rest of the elephant's body to help cool it down too.



A rabbit's large ears catch even the most quiet sounds. The little rabbit doesn't need to turn its head. It turns its long ears to find out where the sound is coming from. Then it quickly hops in the opposite direction.

Underwater Ears

Large, floppy ears could freeze in icy water. That's why a polar bear has small ears covered with thick fur. When a polar bear goes swimming, it closes its ears so water won't trickle in.



A fish doesn't need an outer ear to collect sounds. Sound **vibrations** easily pass right through the fish's body and are picked up inside its head.



You can tell sea lions from seals by their ears. Sea lions have little flaps for ears. Seals just have tiny ear holes that close when they dive. Both seals and sea lions have excellent hearing in and out of the water.

Adapted from an article by Melissa Stewart